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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/385,584	08/27/1999	MICHAEL B. BALL	3817US-(97-1	9380

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EXAMINER

ABRAHAM, FETSUM

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

2826

DATE MAILED: 02/27/2002

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

**Office Action Summary**

Application No.

09/385,584

Applicant(s)

BALL ET AL.

Examiner

Fetsum Abraham

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --  
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

**Status**

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 21 February 2002.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

**Disposition of Claims**

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 33-37 and 41-56 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 33-37, 41-56 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

**Application Papers**

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.  
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on \_\_\_\_\_ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.  
If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

**Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120**

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).  
a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some \* c) ☐ None of:  
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.  
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. \_\_\_\_\_.  
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).  
\* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).  
a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

**Attachment(s)**

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other:

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**Claims rejection**

Based on applicant's argument that the first final rejection was improper on the application declared RCE, the same action is declared as a non final action.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

**Claims 33-37,41-56 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schwiebert et al (PN: 5,672,542)**

The reference discloses a solder mask (544) of uniform thickness (see figure 5) with multiple apertures (330) located to correspondingly to a contact pad location on a substrate upon which the pre-formed mask is to be deposited on or adhered to the substrate. Although the prior art calls the contact regions as wettable regions on the substrate, it is clear that the different expression address the same structure, contact regions on the substrate. Further, the patent introduces different types of solder masks as possible replacement for the preferred metallic mask, out of which one is a non-metal polymer solder mask as in claims 36, 46 and 54 (see column 7, 17-45). This material is specifically addressed to be one of the preferred materials in page 5 of the specification and also the non-metallic nature of the mask according to the independent claims in the application. The material is also in claim 2 and directly implied in claim 1 to have been the mask that went through the process of claim 1. Furthermore, the patent teaches that the mask

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apertures are aligned with the wettable (bump) regions of a surface to receive bumps, clearly establishing the claimed invention. Although the prior art omits using similar phrases to define the same concept (such as "wetable" instead of contact area or region), it would have been obvious to one skilled in the art to safely conclude the similarity of the claimed invention and the prior art because all claimed elements are addressed by the patent.

As for claims 34,44, a non peripheral region of said contact pad is understood to be the active surface of the contact pad whereby contact material is deposited. In the patent, the contact area defines the contact region which also is the active contact area on the substrate.

The structure has alignment holes on the mask and the substrate to align the apertures in both elements, clearly indicating that the peripheral regions of the contact pad are not involved in the contact structure as can be seen in figures 3A. In figure 3D, the lower surface of the contact material (338) falls directly on the contact area over the substrate avoiding the peripheral areas of the contact area.

As for claims 35,45, the height of the apertures dictate terms as to the height of the conductive structures formed through the holes since the conductive materials can not exceed the height of the mask. Anything beyond that height is the active contact region of the contact material.

As for claims 37,47,55 the material characteristic claimed is inherently possessed by the structure since it is open to use similar polymer material as the mask.

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As for claims 48,56 the abstract teaches that the mask remains attached to the substrate during reflow clearly suggesting adherence between the substrate and the mask at least until the process of reflow is complete.

As for claims 51,53 most feedthrough contacts are made to be structures beyond the upper surface of the intermediate dielectric material in order to have a reasonable are of contact Although conductors are sometimes made to conform to the dielectric upper surface as shown by (PN: 5,880,017) to conserve material and processing time. In both cases, the choice is design oriented.

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

**Refer PN: 5,880,017.**

**THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL.** Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event,

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however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the mailing date of this final action.

**Examiner's response to applicant's argument**

Applicant's argument that *prima facie* case of obviousness was not established in the past actions has been acknowledged and provided herein. The difference in terminology for expressing the same concept as discussed above is the main reason for the obvious similarity between both structures: in this case, applicant's language as "contact pad location of a substrate" in relation to the patent's language as "wetable pads".

Applicant argues that the prior art does not teach a nonmetal solder mask with at least one aperture. The argument, however is moot in view of the teachings in the prior art (see column 17-50).

As for the aperture on a contact pad location, column 7, 40-45 of the patent clearly discloses the same claimed structure. In the paragraph, mask aperture is located on bump forming region for bump formation.

As for the argument that the patent omits a an opening to define a peripheral shape, the argument has been considered but not found convincing. This is because any opening on a mask indeed defines a peripheral region of contact area for which it is designed. The peripheral areas of contact regions is by default the outer areas of the contacts themselves. This concept is the basis for the counter argument of the examiner.

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As for the argument that the patent fails to show polymer solder masks which is the type of masks selected by the applicant, the examiner reflects in direct opposition to the argument in light of claims 1 and 2. The "omitted" material, a polymer is clearly claimed by the patent.

As a preliminary matter, since the finality of the application is withdrawn, a more focused response should be expected in response to the next arguments of the applicant.

Any inquiry concerning this communication should be directed to Fetsum Abraham at telephone number (703) 305,3793, or by E-mail at [fetsum.abraham@uspto.gov](mailto:fetsum.abraham@uspto.gov).

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application should be directed to the *SPE of AU:2826* at (703)308-6601, or the *Group receptionist* at (703) 308-0956.

Fetsum Abraham

2/23/02

  
FETSUM ABRAHAM  
PRIMARY EXAMINER